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AUTHOR McLaurin, Sylvia; Coker, Robert
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ABSTRACT

This study of leadership and collaboration in rural adult education begins by outlining the conditions that alter education's role in the community. The stability of land ownership, the relationship between hard work and success and the reliability of traditional methodology can no longer be taken for granted. The educational need for rural adults today is not for more innovative programs, but for focused initiative that produces results on the local, state, and national levels. The paper argues that the most effective and lasting educational programs are created when both the service agency and the community actively and purposefully work together. Coordination enhances efforts by all agencies concerned with rural education. Educational leadership is composed of formal or informal community leaders who provide credibility and a sense of community needs. Also necessary are agency leaders who provide the actual coordination. The document suggests various educational organizations as possible candidates for community leadership, with the community college discussed as a possible educational coordinator. Linkages among other local agencies are also suggested as a way to secure additional resources, strength, and creativity. The problems of making such linkages are discussed, as is the possibility of regional and statewide links. A pragmatic educational methodology is called for in place of osmotic learning to ensure accessibility to all learning. He says that, while state and national government should create clear and simple means for supporting adult education, impetus, planning, and execution must begin on the local level. Charts and a list of references are included. (TES)

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# Notes Toward the Establishment of Educational Partnerships in Rural Communities

**Sylvia McLaurin**
**Coordinator, JTPA Programs**

**Robert Coker**
**Director of Vocational Education**
**Bainbridge Junior College**

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RC 016677

# Notes Toward The Establishment of Educational Partnerships in Rural Communities

Rural America is losing its identity or, more exactly, is gaining a new identity. Truisms of rural life—stability of land ownership, the inviolable relationship between hard work and success, the reliability of traditional methodology—are no longer givens of the rural condition. The economic developments of the last decade have thrust into the forefront of national concerns the plight of rural America. Education of the people is the traditional cultural answer to the problems of sociological and economic flux. Thus it is in these crisis times for rural Americans that educational substance and delivery have priority in the search for solutions.

In his monograph on rural education, Robert L. Bruce notes the general lack of cohesive adult education systems in rural America. He acknowledges isolated effort and specific areas of success, but remarks upon "fragmentation, a lack of communication across efforts, and a lack of continuity in time" (Bruce, 1979). It is apparent from his study and those of Coombs, Hiemstra, Treadway, and others that the problems of rural education go beyond the obvious shortcomings of educational resources in rural areas or the growing demand for strictly practical, materially productive education. These problems are compounded by the lack of a central, efficient, ongoing, community-supported educational system for adults. The current numbers of agencies in each community have led to duplication of effort, paralyzing complexity, and territoriality. We do not have one central source to direct all educational activities in the rural adult population in most communities. In certain situations we have one agency acting alone and in other settings we have too many agencies with many overlapping services.

## Adult Education in Rural Communities

It is useful to begin a study of possible leadership and collaboration in rural adult education by briefly examining first issues concerning the rural community and its adult population. While rural America was once a world apart from urban America, and parts of it are still isolated, much of "rural" America is becoming more and more like its urban counterpart. Sociologists have identified the reverse migration of the last several decades as people move in numbers from the city to the country. The 1980 census showed an increase in population of 15.4% in non-metropolitan counties as opposed to a 9.1% increase in metropolitan counties. More than one-fourth of all Americans live in rural areas, and 82% of that population is non-farm (Filford, 1981). With the observation that the rural population is in most ways very much like the urban population, facing similar problems and seeking to ensure like verities of human existence, the great embroilment over specialized programs for rural audiences begins to lack a basis. Education for human beings has general characteristics that cut across topographical boundaries. And while certain observations of the rural "condition" such as distance, facilities, and community variability have merit and bearing on the question of rural adult education, for those who would educate, the most important principles have to do with human nature itself (Willits, 1982; Gilford, 1981; Barker, 1985; Fletcher, 1985).

### Community and Individual Needs

Recent studies of the problems of educational delivery in rural areas have changed perspective. While educational efforts have been designed to meet the individual and his/her needs, it is now the community that is becoming the educational target. Ernest McMahon explains the need to see the individual within context. Unless community needs are met, the education of the individual accomplishes only limited success (McMahon, 1970). As individual needs are analyzed, so must community needs be identified and met. If the educational response to these needs seeks to be viable, it must take into consideration all forms of education to meet the diverse needs within a community. With regard to rural educational policy, "the primacy of local circumstance" must be at the heart of planning and formulation (Sher, 1977).

In his study on higher education in rural America, Douglas Treadway itemizes those types of educational programs that have been and are being offered to the rural adult. These programs include basic education, occupational training, counseling, life skill information opportunities, and economic development initiatives. Learning vehicles have involved formal postsecondary classes, on-site industrial training, telecommunications, integrated systems or collaborative interagency presentations, and individualized study (Treadway, 1984). A review of specific educational projects nationwide indicates the diversification of programs and agencies serving the rural adult. Karen Hone's survey "Inventory of Model Programs" (1984) and Susan White's "State-of-the-Art" report on rural education and economic development issues (1981) together examine over 60 rural adult educational efforts throughout the nation. The programs include, for example, a mobile graduate program in Maine, a tomato-growing training program for Nevada's Moapa

Indians, and a rural community leaders program in Virginia. As Hone points out, the successful program meets both individual expectations and community needs. It involves a high degree of interagency cooperation and is planned with active participant and community input.

## Factors In Effective Community-Based Education

The mere provision of "educational opportunities" does not guarantee community participation. As Maslow pointed out in the 1950s, selfrealization and achievement will wait on human requirements of survival, safety, and belonging. Many in rural areas are encountering crisis situations involving the loss of land and livelihood, the exodus of youth from rural communities, and drastic alteration of milieu from choices between industrialization or community demise. Survival has become a poignant and all too immediate goal for many rural adults. In a perceptive appraisal of the educational function, McMahon considers viable adult education as that which regards conditions and "situations," not "subjects." Consideration of community educational needs, then, must be both profound and far-sighted. To determine needs, educational planners must become familiar with demographics, community organizations, community values, informal and formal sociological relationships, community power bases, and community functions (McMahon, 1970). Planners must also understand social indicators such as death rate, average number of family members, immigration, reverse migration (urban to rural), minority populations, working women, Southern migration, and unemployment (Hankin and Fey, 1985).

As the numerous educational programs serving rural adults prove, a program must respond to community needs if it is to survive. However, the meeting of needs is the surface, the visible portion of educational effort. It is dependent on specific community and agency behaviors for its initiation and performance (Figure 1). The most effective program implementation takes place when both the service agency and the community actively and purposefully work together for lasting results. The agency/community that would serve the needs of adults must examine its intentions. It must actively seek out the needs of the adult population, but also have sincere concern for the effectualization of a responsive program. The strength of this motivation will provide the necessary aggressiveness required to cope with obstacles such as intricacies of planning, of interaction with clientele and with other agencies, and of evaluation. Adult programs do not simply materialize. Agencies that would serve the rural adult must prod, initiate, actively sustain, and drive toward the accomplishment of specific educational goals. Communities must aggressively seek and support activities ministering to adult educational needs. Such determination, however, would wisely be linked with experience. The agency lacking experience in adult education must do its homework. While it should not become discouraged by the pessimism dispensed by other agencies with unsuccessful programs, it should learn the pitfalls that have limited the effectiveness of other programs.

**Community/Agency Behaviors for Effective Program Implementation**

**Figure 1**

Likewise, the community should actively input information regarding the effectiveness of previous programs, insist upon evaluation of traditional approaches, and be willing to remain open to promising innovative plans. Long-lasting, dynamic, holistic solutions to rural adult educational problems can evolve from this aggressive but cooperative interaction between agency and community.

The development of perceptive, responsive programs is but part of the establishment of viable community adult education. However, the actualization of education programs at the adult level is often made inordinately complicated by the multiple community and non-community agencies that may be involved. For example, a postsecondary institution may wish to offer skill-specific training to meet industry needs in the community. Before that training can take place, over 11 agencies may be contacted for approval or cooperation, including local and state Department of Labor offices, local and national industrial management entities, local and national union offices for each of the skills/occupations taught, relevant state and local secondary and postsecondary system entities, the local chamber of commerce, and community development council. Moreover, such a program must meet each agency's policies and regulations. Such red tape can enervate existing programs or discourage individual agencies from undertaking innovative programs. Developing an understanding of these multiple agencies can be in itself a full-time job beyond the intent or capabilities of many potential suppliers of community adult education. The purpose of the community educational leader is to identify and coordinate learning opportuni-

ties and agencies within the community (Figure 2). The educational leader may or may not undertake specific adult education programs. Rather, the leader provides assessment, organization, and linkage to enable the more effective and efficient accomplishment of educational goals. From the community, the leader receives information regarding needs, interests, goals, present resources, facilities, and clientele demographics. The leader provides to the community organization, assessment, direction, linkages among agencies, information, innovative approaches, and assistance in securing funding.

But the question remains who or what can provide that leadership most effectively in a community to direct collaborative activities.

## Educational Leadership/Community Interactive Relationship

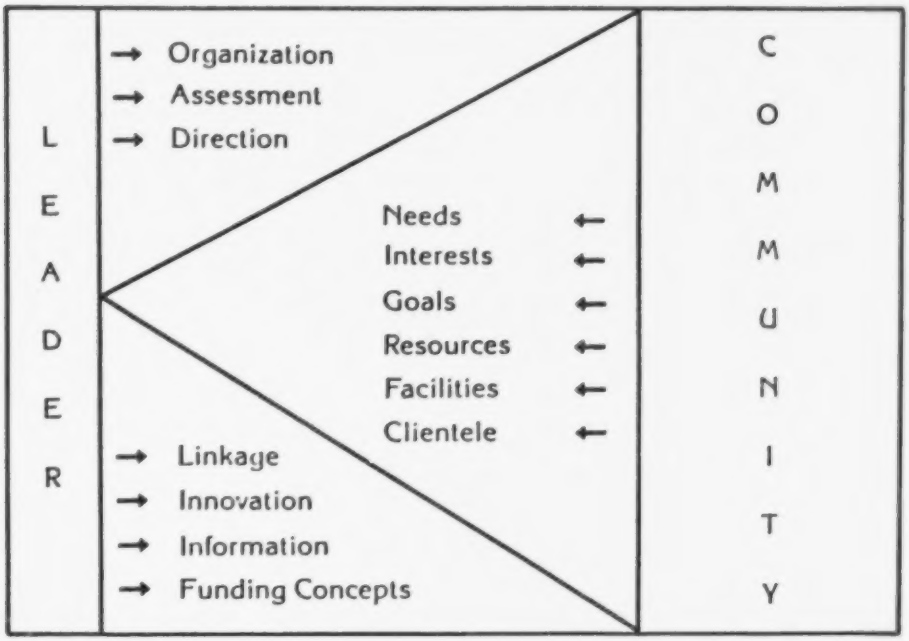


**Figure 2**

## Types of Community Leadership Agencies

### Community Leadership

Educational leadership is actually composed of two entities which must merge forces with each other if the educational goal is to be met. One leadership component involves either formal or informal community leaders. These individuals may be leaders by virtue of their positions of authority, occupation, family status, or participation in community affairs. The function of individual leaders is to assist in obtaining the backing of the community for educational projects and for the coordination effort itself. They are in a likely position to know community educational needs and to stimulate orientation of programs to those needs. They know of and can access funding sources within the community. And, most of all, they can provide essential credibility to such programs through the visibility of their support. The institutional or agency leader is the entity that provides the actual coordination or

facilitation services (Figure 3). It identifies and contacts various community educational entities and stimulates collaboration among these entities. It fosters a creative spirit that encourages both innovative approaches to educational delivery and the setting and accomplishment of educational goals for the community. It sustains interagency cooperation through open communication within the network and with the community. It provides organization assistance and funding information and promotes periodic evaluations of both programs and the collaborative system itself.

**Community Education Facilitation Model**

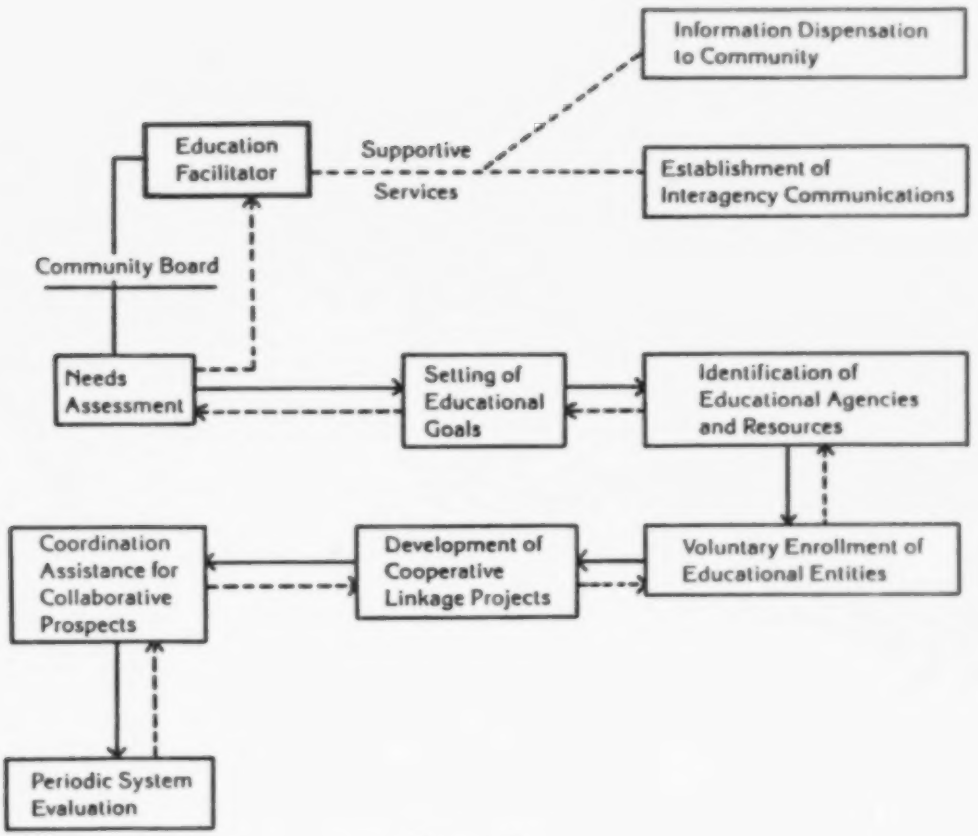


**Figure 3**

### Potential Educational Agencies

Educational leadership has been offered by various community components. The most visible has been the *public school system*. Though its clientele are primarily children and young people, ages 5 through 18, components serve adults through basic education and literacy programs. As the shaper of community attitudes towards education in general, the public school system is primarily concerned with specific subject-oriented goals mandated by the state as required curriculum and competencies, and tends to use traditional modes and methods. As a general rule, the public school system presently lacks the flexibility to coordinate informal as well as formal learning experiences.

Another community educational entity is *public libraries*. Already used by the community for informal self-directed learning, libraries generally are the scene of or are in contact with a variety of learning experiences within the community. In rural areas and in many urban areas as well, however, funding is a crucial matter. Libraries are frequently hard-pressed for funds to keep their staffs paid and their doors open, and cannot spare manpower for general community education coordination.

A third candidate is currently rural America's most comprehensive adult educational institution, the *Cooperative Extension Service.* A national network of county agents and staff, it is the source of information on an incredible variety of subjects dealing with the home, agriculture, youth development, and community resource development. It is tied into state universities throughout the nation and incorporates university personnel as part of its pool of specialists. Its staff workers are trained educators skilled in presenting both formal and informal educational opportunities. Its services are free to the public. It does deal almost exclusively, however, with limited areas of community life. Moreover, while it maintains informal contact with a variety of community organizations for needs assessment and community orientation, it is fundamentally an organization unto itself with guidelines set by governmental, state, and national policy, not by the community. Serving all inhabitants of the community, it functions as a resource entity rather than educational overseer.

Another possible leadership entity may be any one of several external coordinative offices such as those sponsored by *private foundations, state-created ad hoc committees,* and *professional associations.* With the specific purpose of educational coordination such focused entities appear ideal. However, unless such an office is composed of local individuals and/or attuned to community mores and values, it will have difficulty securing cooperation from other community agencies and trust from the community itself.

The myriad of other community educational entities such as local *civic organizations,* community centers such as the *YMCA, churches* and *synagogues, hospitals,* and neighborhood coalitions do provide learning opportunities for rural adults. But they are generally focused toward specific and indigenous ends and lack both funding and expertise for the purpose of providing general educational leadership and coordination for the community as a whole. One entity, the community college, seems ideally suited to provide community leadership.

## The Community College as Educational Coordinator

The community college idea grew out of the perceived need for accessible and accredited postsecondary learning opportunities and is, therefore, purposed towards adult education. Moreover, its orientation has and will continue to be primarily education of individuals within a localized area. Once tied to local public school systems, most community colleges have become independent or linked to state universities directly or indirectly. They now combine understanding of the local community with broader regional, state, and national concerns. The community college is in "an ideal position philosophically and pragmatically to provide . . . leadership . . . helping each community to orchestrate its educational and service efforts to provide maximum opportunity for the entire community" (Hankin and Fey, 1985; also see Feldman, 1985; Boyer and Hechinger, 1981; Cohen, 1977; Gollattscheck, 1976). As the English educator Henry Morris proposed the "village college" in the 1920s to be the solution to the problems of rural education, so today's community college offers great potential as the community educational coordinator in rural America.

**Advantages of the Community College:** The following are community college characteristics that illustrate both its educational potential as well as its administrative capabilities in a community setting:

1. **Specific training capabilities**—for certifiable training, organized curriculum for formal learning
2. **Community response capabilities**—informal learning experiences through continuing education and other components
3. **Educational leadership**—administration by individuals who are part of the community and familiar with its problems, yet whose training, personal experience, and professional connections give wide scope to educational planning
4. **Funding capabilities**—wider funding base than other local entities, especially when connected to statewide university systems with grant and state appropriation capabilities
5. **Expertise in experimentation**—by its nature, purpose, and organization ideally suited to experimenting with new materials and methods
6. **Outreach expertise**—utilization of publicity media and methods to advertise the educational product and to reach so-called non-traditional audiences with increasing success
7. **Board of trustees**—a group familiar with local needs and often representative of the local power base. It guides the affairs of the college and its relationship to the community.
8. **Facilities**—classrooms and other meeting/learning spaces as well as up-to-date equipment
9. **Prestige**—generally respected, and acknowledged as a community authority. The community college can and frequently does influence not only educational matters but sociological, political, and economic matters within the community as well.

**Disadvantages of the Community College:** While these advantages are indeed attractive to the community and to the adult learner, certain drawbacks to the community college both as educational entity and as educational leader for the community must be addressed. The most obvious of difficulties is faculty and administrative attitude regarding the nature of the community college. Still apparent in far too many institutions is the notion that education is the privilege of the intellectual elite, that the business of the college is to offer a haven for scholars, a place of colloquy for superior minds. Thinly disguised, this notion reappears in faculty and administrative concerns that community orientation for the college jeopardizes academic standards. Of a less snobbish but equally problematical vein is the difficulty with which some faculty and administrators view community service. Many more democratically minded institutions feel frankly confused by what seem to be community demands to be all things to all people; and choose, therefore, to hold community response to a minimum. They realize the inadequacy of staff, place, and funds to meet alone all of the adult community's educational needs and desires.

One serious objection that might be raised about the idea of the community college as coordinator for community education is the accusation of self-serving motives. FTEs are an inescapable fact of life for the average community college. Student enrollment is the basis for funding, for expansion, for class offering, for every other facet of college service. Colleges faced with declining enrollments are becoming vitally interested in recruiting adults and are looking in particular at pools of potential students among the disadvantaged and other so-called non-traditional students. The pitfall of self-serving interest is a serious obstacle to both interagency cooperation and to leadership roles. Those who would admit that the community college is a most likely candidate for the position of community educational coordinator often suggest that the college develop a separate office and administrative team that functions independently of the college. However, though such may be advisable, the college that fails to respond to the community in these troubled financial times will be pursuing its own demise. It is dependent on the good will of the community and on the fulfillment of educational promise to its student body. While self-serving actions may temporarily increase enrollment, they will not in the long run keep the college in operation.

It must be noted here that the community college is not the only candidate for the coordination role. However, any agency that would assume the leadership role in community education facilitation must bring to such a position a comprehensive community purview, finesse in the creation and maintenance of community relationships, and dedication to a common community goal regardless of benefits to any one agency. The community college can be an ideal community education facilitator if it is willing to be a nexus, not just one source of formal, traditional education.

## Linkage in a Community

Whether the leader is the community college or any other agency, the point must be emphasized that the key is for someone to take the lead. Viable leadership accomplishes purposeful cooperation among those led. With the multitude of educational opportunities within a community, an educational leader will naturally seek out means for two or more of the service agencies to join efforts in behalf of a common goal. The linkage is usually based on mutual benefits produced by complementary efforts and the accomplishment of agreed-upon goals.

### Advantages of Collaboration

Very simply, cooperation among educational agencies makes possible the accomplishment of vital ends not easily achievable any other way. Agencies join forces for one or all of several reasons (see Beder, 1984; Aiken and Hage, 1968; Hougland and Sutton, 1978).

1. **Pooling of resources**—Agencies with limited resources may collaborate to serve a target clientele more effectively. Collaborative agencies may share funding, clientele, staff, facilities, information, domain, or influence.
2. **Securing of resources**—Agencies may discern reciprocal benefits in using each other's resources when duplication would be unfeasible or inefficient for a single agency.
3. **Security**—Mutual and network relationships usually provide a stronger base for funding than a simple agency.
4. **Efficiency**—In addressing complex problems, agencies that share the work load reduce the stress on any one agency.
5. **Accomplishment**—Agencies that collaborate for a common goal may ultimately serve mutual clients more effectively and may accomplish large goals that impact the community, goals that would be difficult or impossible for agencies acting alone.
6. **Innovation**—Creative approaches to service problems may surface due to interagency stimulus; agencies may avoid superficial or traditional solutions if the relationship is conducive to innovative thinking.

Linkage has been defined as the "temporary blending of two systems into one system to achieve a common purpose" (Boone, 1985). However, community learning coordination should expand to multiple linkage in which various entities that offer forms of adult education are loosely connected to each other in a kind of federation for the long-term purpose of upgrading the community. Linkage implies not so much "boundary setting" as "orchestration." Nor may it be necessarily temporary—for the purpose of stability. The linkage should remain intact as long as the relationship is mutually satisfactory and advances the cause of community education (Valentine, 1984). Linkage may involve the use by one agency of another agency resource to accomplish its purpose, or it may be a goal-oriented exchange in which a common goal achievable only through cooperation is the focus. While linkage may begin as one or more dyadic relationships, the network comes closest to the final ideal operative model—a configuration based on the dynamic development of relationships among various educational agencies or providers (Whetten, 1981). The educational facilitator becomes the linchpin organization among the sets of entities or individual agencies holding a functional relationship with each other.

These relationships may evolve in a community between a governmental agency and community educational entities. For example, in southwest Georgia the area Department of Labor office and a community college have linked to provide the identification and training of rural disadvantaged adults with the goal of viable employment for welfare recipients. As a result of this initial linkage the network has grown to include the area AFDC office, the rehabilitation services office, the mental health center, the training

center for the mentally handicapped, the factory for the blind, area industry, and the public school system. The community college is the training entity for employment skills and as such receives information and client referral. In turn, it assists in job placement upon completion of training. This community program is under the auspices of the regional and state JTPA program offices.

Educators generally agree on what makes for successful collaboration. Linkage has the best chance for success when it includes the identification of resources, community support, leadership, coordination at all levels, supportive services, and an understanding of community characteristics (White, 1981).

## Problems of Linkage

Successful linkage is not necessarily a simple concept or a relationship easily maintained. More powerful members may be in a position to dictate the kinds of education provided by weaker members. Another difficulty is the vested interest potential of network members. This danger is particularly apparent when community leadership is represented by more than one member entity. Of related difficulty is competition for clientele. Agencies may view with suspicion cooperative effort that may potentially undermine their own programs (Hiemstra, 1976). Extensive coordination can also reduce the adaptive capacity of the network system. The possibilities of joint programming also involve compromise, sometimes reducing innovation and diluting impact. Diverse organizations tend to find safe solutions easily amenable to all (Whetten, 1981). There is also a tendency to enforce the status quo, once cooperation is viewed by most participants as an automatic solution to linkage problems. Even though linkage proposes to reduce duplication of effort, researchers have found that the quality of service declines when "useful redundancy" is reduced. To eliminate all redundancy is to limit client access to system educational offerings. Moreover, quality may be reduced by non-competition (Whetten, 1981).

Given the problems with linkage, how may cooperation and the well-being of the network be maintained? A.F. Wilden, professor of rural sociology at the University of Wisconsin, suggests principles that foster cooperation: recognition of the community as an interdependent entity, the strengthening of existing groups, increasing community pride and confidence, sensitivity to change, the fostering of a sense of stability, and the use of outside expertise when required (Wileden, 1961). D. A. Whetten would add that cooperation within a group is difficult to achieve without recognized need for collaboration, the capability of coordination, and a positive attitude toward the system and its members (Whetten, 1981). Many difficult situations can be avoided by meticulous planning. Well conceived linkage takes into consideration that however altruistic the goals, interorganizational efforts work best when each member feels itself a full partner, accruing benefit to itself as well as contributing significantly to the accomplishment of a mutual goal. Such an ideal partnership requires candor, the careful selection of partners, actual and expedient implementation of plans, and realistic and prompt evaluation of the joint effort (Valentine, 1981).

## Regional and Statewide Linkage

Community linkage is but the beginning of potential collaborative efforts. S.V. Martorana and Eileen Kuhns envision a collaborative regional system based on an expanded community college, the "communiversity" which acts as both a linkage and an educational unit capable of serving several communities within a region (Martorana, 1985). Many community colleges are already involved in regional consortia such as the State University of New York—Public Service network, the Capital Region High-Tech conference, the Illinois Interagency Network, Dixie Area Lifelong Learning Project, New Hampshire Continuing Education, and the Warren/Forest Cooperative College Program. Some consortia are composed of and exist primarily for the benefit of area colleges and their students. More than 12 states have state-level governing bodies for community colleges, most of which are concerned with the community development functions of those schools. But some, like the New York and Warren/Forest models, involve other community entities such as libraries and local public school boards. An exemplary project for interagency collaboration on a regional basis is Project Enlist (Educational Network Linking Institution, Students, and Technology) created in western Minnesota. Like a similar program developed in eastern Oregon, it links 15 postsecondary institutions, community education programs, libraries, and media entities that work together to bring educational opportunities to rural Minnesotans (Treadway, 1984). Of particular note is the Lifelong Learning Project of the Education Commission of the States. Sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation, the project gave impetus to the concept of unified state-level planning for adult education through interagency cooperation and communication. Through a representative board and a network of 27 states, specific implementation plans were devised tailored to individual state needs. The project discovered that communication, focus, delineation of responsibility, and legitimacy are basic to statewide planning (Hilton, 1983).

Larger cooperative systems and formal consortia provide more coherent interorganizational planning and broader leadership. But such regional and statewide collaboration can make the relationship among the various members of the local network less responsive, can obligate one community to sacrifice its particularized goals for the good of the region, and can separate the nexus—the community college or another agency—from its collaborators. It is also possible for interconsortia rivalry based on presumed boundaries to occur and to cause a breakdown in responsiveness to local needs. Consortia members may also discover competition for populations in areas where service agencies are in close proximity, may find community support for regional activities difficult to obtain, and may discover that consensus over the establishment of policy and leadership within the consortium to be elusive.

However, on the positive side, regional and statewide systems can provide a wider dissemination of postsecondary expertise, information, and funding for the good of the community, region, and state. They can reduce wasteful duplication of services among institutions and agencies. They can function as a central

clearinghouse to monitor and evaluate individual program efforts from a regional standpoint, increasing the impact of successful programs. If the goal of community collaborative efforts is the upgrading of the community, then regional and state educational collaborations yield benefits for the region and the state.

The development of linkage among individual communities may evolve in a series of steps. It begins in each community with the identification of a community educational leader that will identify community educational needs and attitudes. These leaders may collaborate to establish a regional network for educational delivery. Regional networks may then nominate leaders who work towards the establishment of a state network for educational delivery, a general consortium that connects directly to state government and state funding sources. IF consortia at any level are to work, each one of these steps must be undertaken gradually. At each level of collaboration, care must be taken to ensure the integrity of individual members, to provide a viable vehicle for meeting more localized needs, and to maintain loose collaborative ties in lieu of rigid connections and contracts. Potential problems incumbent on local collaborations are quite possible on a state level as well.

## Action for Rural Adult Learning

From the Morrill Act of 1863 establishing the land-grant colleges to the Rural Development Act of 1972, recognition of educational needs in rural areas has created policy statements and direct funding. The bulk of funding sources has been agricultural in impact. Moreover, as Douglas Treadway points out, "little has been done to provide funding and program development support to implement strategies based on the policies" (Treadway, p. 58). One-fourth of the U.S. population (mostly non-farm individuals) now live in rural areas as opposed to three-fourths of the population (mostly farm individuals) in 1863. Policy changes that will accomplish equity and appropriateness of rural adult education are now in order. These include criteria other than population for program funding, simpler grant guidelines to ease the application of rural-based agencies for assistance to carry out needed services, elimination of rural stereotypes to allow for serious consideration of appeals for reform, an understanding of the diversity of rural America, and improved statistics and statistical data collection in rural adult education. Myopic and outdated national policies are generally reflected on the state level. Many states fail to fund equitably the urban and the rural educational programs. States, as a whole, tend to be less responsive to the needs of their own rural areas, an attitude based in large part on population distribution figures. William Rivera, director of the Center for International Extension Development at the University of Maryland, sees the need for a 50-state network whereby information regarding the education of adults could be pooled. Such would permit more realistic national policies regarding rural education by encouraging states to review their adult education priorities and goals (Rivera, 1984).

As in every area of human inquiry, further research into how adults learn and how to enable them to learn is needed. However, adult education is a field in which thousands upon thousands of pages of theory have been published. Yet our "system" of education for adults continues to belabor traditional approaches, to ignore the obvious, and to continue to search for a magic method. The truth is we know the problem and we know the solution. What adult educational programs need is action—the dynamic address of the known educational requirements of rural adults based on the abundance of information available. A very large part of that solution lies with the establishment of a successful delivery mechanism for rural adult education. That mechanism requires one central entity to assume the leadership role and to succeed in establishing cooperative relationships among agencies committed to common specific goals. Such a mechanism both admits and requires a holistic basis. In his monograph on education, R. Buckminister Fuller remarks that Einstein was successful because he was operational; he saw the totality of things. In our age of specialization, this comment is like a directive from the past to return to general inquiry, to observe our place as part of the whole, and to feel an integral part of community, both immediate and worldwide. Stratification of society by educational level is no longer feasible and was certainly never ethical. As Jefferson pointed out, if the people are not deemed enlightened enough to control the nation, education's task is to enlighten them.

## Summary

The educational need for rural adults today is not for more innovative programs, but for focused initiative productive of tangible results on the local, state, and national levels. The call is for the elimination of barriers to educational programs such as territoriality, complex bureaucratic formulations, and inequitable funding. And the call is for interagency collaboration and flexible systematology that once in place ensure rural access to needed educational opportunities. Coordination will enhance, not limit, efforts by all agencies concerned with rural education. There is enough for all agencies to do in providing comprehensive services to the adult learner.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, among many educators, found the rural environment the prime source of education. In his address, "The American Scholar," he identified nature as "The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind." The lessons are still there, but today's society demands a pragmatic educational methodology in place of osmotic learning. However, it is not so much to impose a way of life or a way of learning on rural Americans as to ensure accessibility to all learning that the collaborative educational effort should be dedicated. While state and national government should create clear and simple means for supporting adult education, the impetus, the planning, the execution must begin on the local level. Whether rural or urban, the adult seeking knowledge must be enabled to discern his or her own need and the means to fulfill that need.

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